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AUTHOR McCombs, Maxwell; Weaver, David
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ABSTRACT

A study to determine the agenda-setting role of the mass media concerning the political interests of the general public during the 1976 presidential campaign is reported. Agenda-setting refers to the transfer of concerns from the media to the general public. The concept is concerned with cognitions rather than attitudes. It has been stated that while the press may not tell us what to think, it definitely tells us what to think about. The sample consisted of 45 registered voters who responded to nine interviews conducted throughout 1976 and in January 1977. In investigating the relationship between media coverage of issues and the salience of issues to voters, the survey measured the extent to which an individual feels an issue is important to him/her (intrapersonal salience) and the extent to which an issue is discussed by an individual to others (interpersonal salience). Results indicate that participants' use of the mass media increases quickly in the election year, peaking in early spring, then dropping off to a lower plateau for the remainder of the year. Initially, political interest influences media use, but heavy media use in the spring, particularly television news, then stimulates political interest. However, use of newspapers for political information generally is a stronger predictor of both interpersonal and intrapersonal issues. The conclusion is that the agenda-setting role for television is the stimulation of public interest, while the dominant role for the newspapers is setting the agenda of issues. (Author/KC)

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Voters and the Mass Media:

Information-Seeking, Political Interest, and Issue Agendas

Maxwell McCombs
Syracuse University

and

David Weaver
Indiana University

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528

Voters learn many things from the mass media. Not only do they learn factual details about issues, they also acquire perspectives about the reltive importance of these issues. It is this ability of the mass media to influence the salience of key political elements that has come to be called the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Through their day-by-day selection and display of the news, editors and broadcasters influence what the voters regard as the key elements of the campaign (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Becker, McCombs, and McLeod, 1975; McCombs, 1976; Shaw and McCombs, In press). In other words, the press helps set the agenda for a political campaign.

Agenda-setting provides a useful conceptualization for the study of political communication and the analysis of mass communication in a political campaign (McCombs and Masel-Walters, 1976). The fruitfulness of this new concept is demonstrated by the rapid proliferation of agenda-setting research since publication of the original McCombs and Shaw research in 1972 (for summary of this recent work see McCombs, 1976). The concept of agenda-setting is is concerned with cognitions, not attitudes. The difference between attitudes and cognitions and the critical distinction between the attitudinal and the agenda-setting effects of mass communication are succinctly stated in Cohen's (1963) remark that while the press may not tell us what to think, it definitely tells us what to think <u>about</u>.

Additionally, agenda-setting is concerned about incidental voter learning across time and not response to immediate stimuli in the mass media. These

shifts in perspective signalled by the concept of agenda-setting, shifts from short-term attitude change to longer-term cognitive development and change, are key characteristics in the historical development of empirical research on political behavior and mass communication.

The original McCombs and Shaw study and virtually all of the research to date on the agenda-setting influence of the press has focused on the issues in political campaigns. Quite consistently this research has demonstrated significant relationships between the agenda of the press and the agenda of issues considered important by the public. These relationships have been documented both synchronously and across time, for general populations and for the various voter sub-groups, and for television and newspapers, albeit in quite different patterns.

There is yet another larger perspective where the concept of agenda-setting can be applied. Taking the broader view, all the elements of politics and political communication are simply one item on the larger social agenda. The concerns of the American public extend far beyond politics. In fact, the level of political interest in the general public between Presidential elections is characteristically low, rising a bit for the off-year election and then ebbing again. This ebb and flow pattern of political interest among the American public suggests that a key role of the mass media and political communication is to stimulate political interest. In agenda-setting terms, this is to say that a key role of the mass media is to move politics high up the national agenda each election year. This may well be the ultimate agenda-setting function of mass communication.

Whichever of these applications of agenda-setting are pursued, the agenda-setting framework underscores the importance of studying the primaries early

in an election year. Agenda-setting, the transfer of concerns from the media to the public, directs our attention to the early, formative stages of public opinion when the actors and issues around whom public opinion will form establish their places in the political arena.

This look at the genesis of voter opinion is especially critical for understanding U. S. presidential politics in 1976, when an initially obscure farmer, elected only to one term as a state senator and one term as governor of Georgia, stood in the national polls by mid-summer and in the Electoral College on November 3 ahead of the incumbent president of the United States, a man who had served over 20 years in national political office.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In an effort to trace changes in issue saliences and other related political variables during the 1976 presidential campaign, a panel of approximately 45 registered voters in each of three diverse communities was recruited in January of 1976. The panel members were interviewed in February, March, May, July, August, September, October and November of that year and again in January of 1977, a total of nine interviews. Most of the interviews, which were designed to gather respondent-oriented reactions to the issues in the campaigns, were conducted by telephone. Interviewers attempted to gain unusual rapport with the panel members to facilitate acquisition of unanticipated reactions to the campaign.

These interviews were conducted with voters in Evanston, Illinois, a suburban Chicago community; metropolitan Indianapolis, Indiana; and Lebanon, New Hampshire, a small New England town. The probability samples from which panel members were recruited were designed to overrepresent those in the communities who usually followed political campaigns either in their newspapers

or on television. Those not using the media and those indicating no interest in politics were systematically eliminated from the sample pool.

The median age of panel members was in the 30s. About 40% were college graduates. Approximately half of those working outside the home had jobs traditionally classified as white collar. And 47% of the panel members were female.

I. Political Interest and Information-Seeking

Interest in politics is a cyclical phenomenon among American voters, regularly rising and ebbing every four years with the coming and going of the Presidential election. The quadrennial peaking of interest in politics is clearly illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

Only 40% of our panel respondents expressed high interest in politics at the time of our pre-New Hampshire primary February interview. (But even this figure undoubtedly represents a rising level of interest from previous months and our panel consists of only registered voters.) However, the level of political interest continued to build during the primary season, reaching 60% by July. In short, while only two out of five voters expressed high interest in politics during February, five months later three out of five expressed high interest.

From July onward -- through the conventions, the televised debates, and all the other events of the campaign -- the proportion of voters in our panel expressing high interest in politics remained stabilized at about 60%. As an aside, this point of stabilization roughly coincides with the traditional pattern of decision making by voters. (Campbell et al., 1964) That is, once the leading candidates are known for each party a majority of American voters usually have selected the candidate they vote for in November. The correlation, at the individual level, between the peaking of interest and selection of a ballot choice can be pursued in future analyses.

TABLE 1

Proportion of Voters "Very Interested" in the Campaign Over Time[1]

February	March	May	July
39.4%	50.7%	53.7%	60.6%
n = 137	n = 136	n = 136	n = 127

August	September	October	(November turn-out)
57.1%	57.8%	60.3%	96.9%
n = 133	n = 128	n = 126	n = 130

Turning to the aggregate trends in the use of newspapers and television for news about politics, Table 2 shows the rise and fall

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Table 2 about here

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across 1976 in use of these mass media. Both begin at a low point in December, rise quickly to their peak in March -- this is the heart of the primary season and time when Presidential politics quadrennially burst anew on the scene in full profusion -- then settle down to a stable level of use for the remainder of the political year. The only deviation from this long period of stability reaching from the late primaries up to the general electrion is the drop in newspaper use during August -- probably accounted for by the disruption of vacations and outdoor activities in late summer.

Overall, the use of newspapers and television show highly similar patterns across 1976. When the proportion of heavy users are rank-ordered across the six points in time separately for each medium and then compared, the resulting correlation is .83 (Spearman's rho). These two trends in Table 2 are highly dissimilar from the ~~use~~ level of political interest illustrated in Table 1, yielding correlations of approximately zero.

Finally, it should be noted that at all six points in time the proportion of our panel reporting extensive use of TV exceeds the proportion reporting extensive use of newspapers to follow politics.

TABLE 2
Proportion of Voters Using Newspaper/Television
"a great deal" to Follow Politics 2

	December	March	May	July	August	October
Newspaper	28.2%	43.8%	37.8%	34.4%	26.5%	38.4%
	(n = 142)	(n = 137)	(n = 127)	(n = 128)	(n = 132)	(n = 125)
TV	30.5%	48.2%	39.3%	37.5%	38.6%	41.3%
	(n = 141)	(n = 137)	(n = 127)	(n = 128)	(n = 132)	(n = 126)

II. Issues in the 1976 Campaign

According to the press, differences in personality, not issues, were the main concern of most voters during the 1976 campaign. (Miller, 1977) However, Arthur Miller of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan claims that a CPS survey of 2,300 voters interviewed during the six weeks prior to the election indicates otherwise.

"From our analysis we determined that voters were differentiating the candidates with respect to issues, whereas the overall evaluation of the candidates' personal appeal was very similar." (Miller, 1977)

This finding further emphasizes the importance of studying the relationship between media coverage of issues and the salience of issues to voters. In this paper, two separate types of issue saliences are considered: intrapersonal salience--the extent to which an individual feels an issue is important to him or her, and interpersonal salience--the extent to which an issue is discussed by an individual with others.[3]

Although most of the research on agenda-setting has been concerned with the media's influence on intrapersonal saliences, there is reason to believe that media coverage also affects which issues are discussed most often. There is also evidence to suggest that media coverage of issues influences which issues are perceived to be important to others in the community (McLeod, Becker and Byrnes, 1974), but this paper will consider only those issues felt to be most personally important and those issues discussed most often.

Table 3 shows the percentages of all respondents in our three-community study choosing each issue category as personally most important, as well as the rank-ordering of each issue category in terms of the percentage of respondents choosing it. Table 4 contains the same information, but for those issues discussed most often with others. Responses not fitting into the 11 issue categories were coded as "Other" and were not ranked.

Tables 3 and 4 About Here

The general dominance of economic issues is obvious in both Tables 3 and 4. By the final wave of interviews, more than 60% of the responses were for unemployment, inflation, taxes or state of the economy in both tables. Almost 50% of the responses were for economic issues at the beginning of the study in February 1976.

In general, the rankings of issues considered personally most important and issues discussed most often remained relatively stable across time.

In fact, the rank-order correlations (Spearman's rhos) from month to month for the intrapersonal issue agendas in Table 3 range from .68 to .95, with the least similar rankings occurring between February and March and the most similar rankings occurring near the end of the campaign--between August and September, and between October and November. The month-to-month rhos for the interpersonal agendas in Table 4 are also high (.75 to .93), indicating relative stability of

TABLE 3

Issues Considered Personally Most Important (Intrapersonal)
During the 1976 Presidential Campaign

Issues	February %	rank	March %	rank	May %	rank	July %	rank	August %	rank	September %	rank	October %	rank	November %	rank
Unemployment	9.9	5	15.5	3	10.4	4	12.0	3	10.9	3	11.7	3.5	16.9	2	17.3	2
Inflation	17.6	1	20.2	1.5	14.9	3	19.4	2	16.3	2	20.4	1.5	34.3	1	25.8	1
Taxes	2.3	10	3.9	7.5	1.5	11	.8	11	4.7	8	5.1	7	5.2	6	7.6	4
State of Economy	16.8	2	20.2	1.5	18.7	2	22.6	1	25.5	1	20.4	1.5	12.8	3	13.8	3
Crime	6.9	6	0.0	11	5.2	6	8.0	4	8.5	4.5	7.1	5.5	3.5	7.5	4.4	8.5
Racial Issues, Busing	3.8	8.5	1.6	10	3.0	10	2.4	9.5	1.6	11	2.0	10	1.8	10	2.7	10
Health, Education, Welfare	14.5	3	5.4	5	5.2	6	6.5	7.5	7.0	6	7.1	5.5	7.0	4.5	5.3	6.5
Environment, Energy	11.5	4	4.7	6	3.7	8.5	6.5	7.5	3.9	9	4.1	8	2.9	9	4.4	8.5
Government Credibility	4.6	7	3.9	7.5	5.2	6	7.2	5.5	5.4	7	2.6	9	3.5	7.5	5.3	6.5
Government Size, Spending	1.5	11	2.3	9	3.7	8.5	2.4	9.5	2.3	10	1.0	11	1.2	11	2.2	11
Foreign Affairs, Defense	3.8	8.5	14.7	4	20.9	1	7.2	5.5	8.5	4.5	11.7	3.5	7.0	4.5	7.1	5
Other	9.0		7.9		7.0		4.8		5.4		6.6		4.1		4.0	
n=	(131)		(129)		(134)		(124)		(129)		(123)		(117)		(126)	

TABLE 4

Issues Talked About Most Often with Others (Interpersonal)
During the 1976 Presidential Campaign

Issues	February		March		May		July		August		September		October		November	
	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank
Unemployment	9.3	4.5	10.4	5	12.6	3	12.2	2	10.1	4	9.9	5	15.9	2.5	14.5	2.5
Inflation	17.8	1	20.8	1.5	10.8	4.5	17.4	1	11.0	2.5	20.7	2	32.4	1	25.0	1
Taxes	1.6	11	1.9	10.5	2.7	9	0.9	11	2.7	8	8.1	7	6.6	4	8.7	4
State of Economy	16.1	2	20.8	1.5	18.0	1	10.4	3	21.1	1	30.6	1	15.9	2.5	14.5	2.5
Crime	5.9	6	5.7	6	9.9	6	9.6	4.5	6.4	6	9.9	5	5.3	5	3.5	8
Racial Issues, Busing	2.5	10	1.9	10.5	2.7	9	2.6	10	0.9	11	1.8	11	1.3	10.5	1.2	11
Health, Education, Welfare	13.6	3	11.3	3.5	10.8	4.5	9.6	4.5	8.3	5	9.9	5	3.3	7	4.7	7
Environment, Energy	9.3	4.5	4.7	7	2.7	9	3.5	9	1.8	9.5	3.6	9	2.6	8.5	2.3	9.5
Government Credibility	5.1	7.5	2.8	8.5	5.4	7	6.9	7	1.8	9.5	4.5	8	2.6	8.5	5.2	6
Government Size, Spending	5.1	7.5	2.8	8.5	1.8	11	5.2	8	3.7	7	2.7	10	1.3	10.5	2.3	9.5
Foreign Affairs, Defense	4.2	9	11.3	3.5	16.2	2	7.8	6	11.0	2.5	10.8	3	4.6	6	5.8	5
Other	9.3		5.7		6.3		13.9		21.1		20.7		7.9		12.2	
n=	(118)		(106)		(111)		(115)		(109)		(111)		(103)		(115)	

interpersonal issue saliences across time, with the least similar agendas in May and July and the most similar in August and September.

Overall, a comparison of all intrapersonal issue agendas with the February intrapersonal agenda and a similar comparison for interpersonal issues (with Spearman rhos) indicated that the personally most important (intrapersonal) agendas were somewhat more stable over the entire campaign (.53 to .73) than were the discussion (interpersonal) agendas (.33 to .82).

Although there are no major shifts in both kinds of issue agendas across time, the economic issues tend to increase in importance over the campaign, particularly the inflation issue from September to late October. However, a corresponding drop in the salience of the general state of the economy tends to offset this gain in the salience of inflation.

Other issues such as crime, racial problems, health and welfare, and government spending tend to remain constant or decrease in importance during the campaign. Foreign affairs increases in importance for the first half of the year, then declines during the second half.

The evidence in Table 4 suggests that voters also talk about the topics which are most personally important to them. The increase in the salience of economic issues is also evident here, as well as the decrease in salience of health and welfare, and the relative stability of other non-economic issues.

Overall, then, the picture of issues considered personally most important and discussed most often with others during the

1976 campaign is one of surprising stability for the panel members of this study. Apparently later events in the campaign, such as the national conventions and the televised debates, had little effect on the relative levels of salience of the major issues.

III. Mass Media Influence on Political Interest

The hypothesis examined here is that the mass media play a macro agenda-setting role, stimulating interest in the presidential election and moving that topic up the social agenda during an election year. The substantial correlation between media use and political interest has been documented numerous times in a wide variety of political communication settings. The question here regards direction of effect: Does mass communication stimulate interest in politics?

Beyond testing the basic hypothesis about the direction of effect between use of the mass media to follow politics and interest in politics, there are two followup questions. (1.) What is the time lag between the two phenomena? Over what interval of time do we find the strongest correlations between the two variables? (2.) Do television and newspapers play the same political communication role here? Other evidence from agenda-setting research has suggested differing roles for the two news media.

Examination of the patterns in the cross-lagged correlations presented in Tables 5A and 5B suggests that the interplay between media use and political interest changes during three distinct time periods. In the pre-campaign period before the opening primary in New Hampshire, the dominant influence is from political interest to use of mass communication fo follow politics. This is especially true for the television data in Table 5A. In all five comparisons the effect of February political interest on subsequent use of TV is much stronger than the subsequent effects of early media use.

But the picture changes as we move into the height of the primary season--reflected in the March and May interviews with our panel. Now the dominant

TABLE 5 A

Correlations (gamma coefficients) between
Use of Television and Political Interest

	Feb.	Mar.	May	July	Aug.	Oct.
Feb. Media → Political interest	.31	.03	.09	.14	.12	.16
Feb. Political interest → Media	"	.33	.45	.24	.35	.31
Mar. Media → Political interest		.30	.26	.52	.30	.45
Mar. Political interest → Media			.26	.09	.21	.39
May Media → Political interest			.46	.53	.47	.45
May Political interest → Media				.19	.26	.51
July Media → Political interest				.40	.48	.39
July Political interest → Media					.51	.55
Aug. Media → Political interest					.60	.51
Aug. Political interest → Media						.56

For question wording see notes 1 and 2.

TABLE 5 B

Correlations (gamma coefficients) between
Use of Newspapers and Political Interest

	Feb.	Mar.	May	July	Aug.	Oct.
Dec. Media → Political interest	.28	.15	.12	.24	.25	.05
Feb. Political Interest → Media		.18	.41	.23	.27	.24
Mar. Media → Political interest		.29	.08	.23	.31	.08
Mar. Political Interest → Media			.36	.26	.23	.36
May Media → Political interest			.38	.31	.38	.01
May Political Interest → Media				.17	.15	.15
July Media → Political interest				.30	.28	.06
July Political Interest → Media					.11	.19
Aug. Media → Political interest					.31	.03
Aug. Political Interest → Media						.31

For question wording see notes 1 and 2.

influence reflected in the cross-lagged correlations is from media use to subsequent political interest. It was, of course, during this very time period that use of the mass media to follow politics peaked among the voters in our panel. The data in Tables 5A and 5B document the subsequent effects of this extensive media use in the spring. Heavy use of mass communications in the spring for orientation to the presidential election seems to generate extensive interest in the election during subsequent months.

Interestingly, the absolute values of the correlations peak during July and August. That is, the cumulative effect of heavy TV use in March and May peaks during the summer months, suggesting a time lag of two to four months in the influence of mass communication coverage on voter interest in the Presidential election.

Past this peak period of media use, the relationship between use of mass communication to follow politics and interest in the Presidential election is largely reciprocal. One also should recall that during these latter months of the election year, political interest had reached asymptote among the members of our voter panel.

Although the three time periods can be traced in both the television and newspaper data, they are more prominent for television. There are more distinct differences in the TV data between the competing cross-lag hypotheses, plus the absolute values of the TV/Political Interest correlation exceed the Newspaper/Political Interest correlation in 27 of the 35 comparisons possible between Tables 5A and 5B.

IV. Information Seeking and Issues

Most of the previous work on media agenda-setting has compared the rankings of media coverage of issues with the rankings of these same issues by voters, during the same time periods and across time. (See McCombs, 1976) Because the media content data, (newspapers, news magazines and television) for all three locations of this study were not quite ready for analysis at the time this report was written, a more indirect method of assessing media influence on the salience of issues was used here.

Panel members were asked about the frequency of their newspaper and television use for news about politics in December 1975, March 1976, May, July, August, and October.[2] Thus it was possible to classify voters as heavy or light newspaper and television users for political information, and to relate these patterns of information seeking to the intrapersonal and interpersonal issue agendas for each group by means of Cramer's V, a nominal-level measure of association which varies from 0 to 1 in value.[4] Although this obviously is not as direct a test of agenda-setting as is an actual comparison of the media agendas with voter agendas, it does yield some indication of

the strength of association between different patterns of political information seeking and different patterns of issue saliences.

Tables 6 and 7 About Here

The Cramer's V measures of association in Tables 6 and 7 suggest that political information seeking from newspapers was fairly similar in strength to political information seeking from television as a predictor of both kinds of issue agendas.

Use of newspapers for political information was a slightly more stable predictor of intrapersonal and interpersonal issue saliences across time, however, than was use of television. For the six months in which political information seeking from newspapers and television was measured, the average range from the lowest to the highest intrapersonal correlation across time was .12 for newspaper use and .16 for television use. The average range for the interpersonal correlations was .14 for newspaper use and .15 for television use. This difference was more pronounced (.11 vs. .19) in the second half of the campaign in Table 6 and in the first half of the campaign in Table 7 (.16 vs. .21).

The pattern of correlations in Tables 6 and 7 also reveals that newspaper use for political information was generally a stronger predictor of both intrapersonal and interpersonal issue agendas than was television use. Of 32 possible comparisons in Table 6, the newspaper use correlations were stronger than

TABLE 6

Correlations (Cramer's V) Between Frequency of Media Use for Political Information and Intrapersonal Issue Agendas During the 1976 Presidential Campaign

	Media Use for Political Information in:											
	December 1975		March 1976		May 1976		July 1976		August 1976		October 1976	
Issues Considered Personally Most Important in:	Newsp. Use	TV Use	Newsp. Use	TV Use	Newsp. Use	TV Use	Newsp. Use	TV Use	Newsp. Use	TV Use	Newsp. Use	TV Use
February	.30	.32										
March	.26	.27	.17	.29								
May	.29	.27	.28	.29	.42							
July	.30	.36	.26	.22	.33	..	.40	.29				
August	.34	.30	.31	.38	.40	.32	.39	.31	.28	.23		
September	.28	.32	.33	.37	.37	.24	.26	.29	.35	.25		
October	.37	.33	.27	.21	.37	.25	.25	.22	.34	.12	.31	.18
November	.30	.29	.31	.18	.40	.32	.44	.35	.38	.36	.30	.37
n=	(122)	(121)	(121)	(121)	(126)	(126)	(120)	(120)	(123)	(123)	(111)	(111)

TABLE 7

Correlations (Cramer's V) Between Frequency of Media Use for Political Information and Interpersonal Issue Agendas During the 1976 Presidential Campaign

Media Use for Political Information in:

Issues Discussed Most Often in:	December 1975		March 1976		May 1976		July 1976		August 1976		October 1976	
	Newsp.	TV	Newsp.	TV	Newsp.	TV	Newsp.	TV	Newsp.	TV	Newsp.	TV
February	.33	.31										
March	.36	.28	.31	.25								
May	.24	.21	.22	.35	.30	.42						
July	.39	.31	.36	.31	.22	.32	.29	.36				
August	.36	.47	.41	.39	.31	.33	.41	.33	.29	.23		
September	.30	.37	.35	.24	.30	.27	.22	.29	.32	.35		
October	.34	.28	.36	.36	.35	.28	.27	.33	.35	.27	.36	.29
November	.35	.19	.36	.35	.35	.21	.30	.36	.30	.28	.51	.39
n=	(108)	(108)	(100)	(100)	(105)	(105)	(100)	(100)	(86)	(86)	(95)	(95)

the television use correlations in 21. In the second half of the campaign (July through October), the newspaper use correlations were stronger in 9 of 11 comparisons.

Newspaper use correlations with interpersonal agendas (Table 7) also tended to be somewhat stronger than those for television, with newspaper use correlations dominating in 20 of 32 comparisons overall, and in 14 of 21 comparisons in the first half of the campaign (December through May).

In spite of these patterns, the overall general finding in Tables 6 and 7 is that frequency of newspaper and television use for political information were moderately strong and stable predictors of intrapersonal and interpersonal issue agendas during the 1976 campaign.

CONCLUSIONS

There are distinct stages in the quadrennial resurgence of interest in presidential politics. Use of mass media increases quickly in the election year, peaking in early spring, then dropping off a bit to a lower plateau for the remainder of the year. Voter interest in the campaign builds more slowly, steadily moving upward until summer where it also settles on a plateau.

Examination of the correlation of these media use patterns and political interest also yields distinct stages during the election year. Initially, political interest influences media use. But heavy media use in the spring, especially extensive use of television news, stimulates subsequent political interest.

In contrast, use of newspapers for political information generally was a stronger predictor of both intrapersonal and interpersonal issue agendas than was television use. However, the differences are not as striking as in previous research (See McCombs, Shaw, and Shaw, 1972; McCombs Becker, and

Weaver, 1975; McCombs, 1976; McClure and Patterson, 1974 and 1976; Patterson and McClure, 1976; and Tipton, Haney and Basehart, 1975).

But this conclusion is also based on an indirect test of agenda-setting. The more direct test of comparing actual media issue agendas with voter issue agendas may produce different conclusions regarding the agenda-setting influence of newspapers and television during the 1976 election campaign.

Nevertheless, these preliminary data begin to sketch rather different political roles in society for newspapers and television news: a macro agenda-setting role, the stimulation of political interest, for television; the dominant role in setting the agenda of issues for newspapers. Detailing these roles of the news media may be one of the most significant, albeit serendipitious, contributions of agenda-setting research.

Notes

[1]The question asked was: "At this time, how interested are you in the presidential campaign?" The responses were: "very interested" "somewhat interested" and "not at all interested".

[2]The specific measures were: "During the past month how much did you use the newspaper for news about political issues and events? not at all, very little, some, a great deal" (newspaper political information seeking); "During the past month how much did you use television for news about political issues and events? not at all, very little, some, a great deal" (television political information seeking). Only those answering "a great deal" to each question were considered "heavy" political information seekers from newspaper or television.

[3]The specific measures were: "Of the various problems and issues now facing the United States, which is most important to you personally?" (intrapersonal); "Which of these problems and issues have you talked about most often with others during the past month?" (interpersonal). Responses to these open-ended questions were content analyzed and coded into the issue categories used in Tables 3 and 4.

[4]Cramer's V ranges from 0 to 1 when several nominal categories are involved. A large value of V merely signifies that a high degree of association exists, without revealing the manner in which the variables are associated. Cramer's V is based on the cases in each category, not simply the modal categories. See Norman H. Nie et al., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Second Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975),

pp. 224-225; and Frank M. Andrews et al., A Guide for Selecting Statistical Techniques for Analyzing Social Science Data (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The Institute for Social Research, 1974), p. 9.

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